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_____ They say the tongues of dying men
Enforce attention like deep harmony. — Shakesp.

THE death-bed has ever been considered as the only scene where the stern realities of mortal existence are seen to pass in appalling review; where there is nothing to glop over their defects, and conceal their deformities; and where the tongue of falsehood and of flattery must bow before the humiliating convictions of truth. It is a dark and solemn hour. The tide of life has ebbed almost away; the golden clouds of morning have lost their resplendent coloring; the hues that fringed them are changed into twilight and gloom; and the voices

that gave the glad response of happiness, are now either hushed in speechless agony, or heard alone in sighs.

We are often in the course of our lives led to take a view of the past, and look forward to the future; to sum up our errors, and to make resolutions of future amendment; to desist in our career of sin or of folly, and endeavor to proceed in a manner more conformable to the dictates of heaven. In the gloom & sadness of night, innumerable circumstances conspire to lead back our minds over the past. We shudder when we reflect upon what we have been; we tremble at the conviction that we have humbled ourselves so low even in our own eyes. Conscience is quick in its admonitions, and sharp in its sting. In the moments of solitary reflection, when we have nothing to drive them away, the shafts of conscience come home to our bosoms; and who can bear them?

All have felt these stings upon their hearts. None is so completely seared to all human feeling, none is so completely allied to the nature of the daemon, as not to have felt at times the arrows of remorse. In some men, they wither up every fibre of the heart; they spread for their victim the couch of thorns, and the pillow of fire; they poison his cup of happiness, and amid his most beloved enjoyments, throw their channelled horrors upon his sight. Those, upon whom such an influence is exerted, are often made monuments of divine mercy; and are enabled to find that repose in religion which all their own attempts could never effect. But others, resisting the attacks of conscience, lose after awhile the faculty of feeling its stings; they go on, adding crime to crime; their compunctious visitations are short & transitory; no lasting im-

pression is made, and they die as they have lived — hardened and impenitent.

Our readers will pardon this digression. But if these are the effects of conscience in daily life; if such are the awful consequences of the retrospection of past guilt; what must they be in the last and trying hour? Expanded in one dreadful scroll, appears the sad record of guilty pleasures, of vain pursuits, of crimes committed, of opportunities neglected, of injuries done to our fellow-beings. They startle the soul with their number; they enforce attention from the dying sufferer; nor can anything avail to shut them out. We have been told of vamps in all the wildness of fable & of imagination of imps that peeped and gibbered from behind "the foldings of the sick man's curtain;" but the visions of retrospection are infinitely less tolerable than all such infernal array. When a life

has been ill spent, dark indeed is the valley of the shadow of death, and terrible in truth are the shades of former crimes that rise in dim-waving solemnity. The affecting picture which Dr. Young has drawn, in his death of Altamont, is not an unique. The wildness of despair has dashed many a soul like Altamonts, "into scattered fragments of broken thought." — As for the past, worlds, were they possessed, would be given for its obliteration; — as for the future, the agonized anticipation is unable to bear its idea. Men have laughed at the ~~idea~~ thought of death, while fresh in the bloom of health; but when stretched on the couch which shall never see them rise, they cannot exclaim

— Come he slow, or come he fast,
It is but death that comes at last; *

there is something then that makes every throb awake to energy and agony; which bids them look upon

* Scott.

death as more than a mere name.

Even the less openly wicked; even the man whose life has apparently been inconsistent with moral decorum; must feel certain harrowings of remorse at the moment of separation. He cannot look back with pure and unalloyed pleasure. He has not made his peace with heaven; he has not lived as if he expected something more than mere morality; and the future presents but a blank and cheerless prospect. Though he is charged with few, if any, gross violations of the moral law, yet he feels that all is not right. He clings to life, because he fears the future. He looks with regret upon the fading beams of mortal existence. Like a traveller driven by a hurricane to the edge of a precipice, he cannot retrace his footsteps, and if he goes forward, he perishes.

We have been told of fearless deaths of men of no professed religion.

were they depicted as they ought to have been, we should have been told of brutal ferocity contending with the agonies of death. We have heard of those who met death with complacency — alas! stupid insensibility to the future, & carelessness of the past are the most awful attendants of a deathbed. Infidels are said to have died with composure; — what were the agonies of Voltaire, — of Paine, and their like? The nerve of atheism trembled and gave way. The giant strength that had endured till now, was [illegible] converted into sudden weakness; and death, disclosed in all the bony nakedness of his form, closed the terrific scene. If deaths like these are composure; if scenes like these are calm; if there is no terror on such occasions as these; then are the silent hours of the destroyer as awful as when he comes clad in stormy coldness, and

desolating as the whirlwind in his course. Alas! if ~~[illegible]~~ it be a calm, it is the stupid apathy of despair, the utter extinction of memory and of hope! ——

But is the death bed always thus? Is the king of darkness always shrouded in such a fearful garb? Does the ocean of life lash the receding shore always with such fury, or sleep with such a dreadful calm? — Around the couch of the Christian, another spectacle is ~~[illegible]~~ seen. To him "This king of terrors is the prince of peace." As life recedes, and as the soul looks forth upon eternity, he welcomes the deliverer from pain and from affliction. Sorrow for past transgression is swallowed up in victory over sin. The light of immortality is dawning upon the pinioned spirit; and she hails afar those arms, once stretched on Calvary, now waiting to receive her for ever more. Reader! be thine and ours such a death! ——

Men are accustomed it is to be feared to ~~regard~~ anticipate death in an improper light. They either dismiss all thought of its arival, or regard it with uneasiness; - or they look upon it only as a dark & dismaying hour, upon whose gloom they are afraid to ~~look~~ gaze. Did they think of it as the passage from finite to infinite existence, from mortality with all its feverish disquietudes to immortality and certainty, they would perhaps act in a different manner. But, however lovely have been the deaths of Christians, and however awful the expiring cries of the impenitent, they have been alike slighted. They have not been looked upon as if they were realities. The accounts of them have been deemed exaggerated, or without foundation. Experience has been no guide, and example no warning. Men have run their course, and died at last in the

horror of which they doubted the possi-
=bility.

There is, when viewed aright, some-
=thing cheering in the prospect of death,
which counterbalances all its gloom.
It frees the captive from his chains,
and the wretch from his miseries. It
bursts this tenement of clay, and
leads the spirit to the enjoyment of
immortal life. It sweeps at once away
the cares, the pains, and the delusions
of life. The Thracian mother, who
wept over her new born child, but
rejoiced over its birth, though her conduct
may at first appear unnatural, yet
acted not without reason. She felt
that her offspring had exchanged his
prospect of sorrow for one of joy. In
the contemplation of eternity, the
soul seems lost in extacy. This state
of probationary employment appears
neither fitted to its powers nor its
inclinations. The vista of time seems

too short for the development of all its faculties. The ties of mortality drag it down to earth; but in those moments of sublime enthusiasm, which ~~perhaps~~ not all have felt in their highest degree, the consciousness of immortality seems to forget all that holds the spirit. Exalted in imagination far above suns & planets and azure skies, the mind becomes dazzled with the ~~far~~ anticipated glory, and sinks again to earth, to lament that the hour of deliverance has not yet arrived.

This innate consciousness of eternal duration, this burst of enthusiasm, the voice, attuned to strange harmony, of the dying words, — all bid us look forward with high & holy & rapturous feelings to our last hours on earth, & to remember that while

Life makes the soul dependent on the dust,
Death gives her wings to mount above the spheres: —

Thro' chinks, styled organs, dim life peeps at l
—Death bursts th' involving cloud, & all is day;
All eye, all ear, the disembodied power.
Death has feign'd ills nature shall not feel;
Life, ills substantial wisdom cannot shun.
Is not the mighty mind, that son of heaven,
By tyrant life dethroned — imprisoned — pained?
By death enlarged — ennobled — deified? —
Death but entombs the body, life the soul. — Jou

E.